

Choosing a School

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Choosing a school for your child can be a difficult process, especially if your child has special educational needs. This information sheet aims to provide you with some information on how choosing a school works when you have a child with a statement of special educational needs. It also provides a list of things you may want to think about in making a decision about the school you wish your child to attend.

Where can my child go to school?

A school can not refuse to admit your child because they have a special educational need (SEN) or disability. Most children with statements continue to attend mainstream school but some may need more specialist support which is provided in a designated resourced provision or in a special school.

You can express a preference for your child to attend any maintained school, an academy or a free school, the local authority will support this preference as long as the school is suitable for your child's age, ability, skills and special educational needs; your child's presence will not adversely effect the education of other children already at the school; and placing your child in the school will be an efficient use of the local authority's resources.

The local authority will consider your representations if you think that your child should attend a school which is an independent school, however, the local authority would have to ensure that any such placement is an appropriate use of public expenditure. These schools often have a high placement fee, and for this reason the local authority would normally only consider naming an independent school in part 4 of the statement if it is deemed that your child's needs cannot be met in a local authority maintained school, an academy or a free school.

What sort of help might school provide?

All schools have resources to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN, if your child attends a mainstream school further resources are provided as a 'top up' to support the school in meeting your child's needs as set out in their statement. Resourced provisions within schools and special schools are set up to be fully resourced to meet the needs of children with special educational needs.

Further information is provided in the parent information leaflet 'SEN Support in Kirklees Schools' and the 'Kirklees Guidance to Schools' document. Both these documents can be accessed from your Casework Officer.

How do I decide?

It is important that you have as much information as possible to help you make the decision about which school you feel is right for your child. You will probably want to visit schools that you think might be suitable and may wish to take your child with you.

You might find it helpful to consider the following points before your visit:

- do you want to visit the school when the children are in class?
- would you like to meet the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO)?
- what information could you take that would help the school to understand your child's needs?
- what does your child think about the school?
- would you like to read some information about the school before you go?

For example:

- the school prospectus
- the Special Educational Needs Policy
- the Behaviour Policy
- the latest OFSTED inspection report

Visiting a school – questions you might want to ask

You should try to find out as much information as possible about how the school will help your child and how they will involve you.

- Does the school have experience of helping children with similar difficulties to those of my child?
- How will school arrange the sort of support my child needs?
- How does school make sure that all the staff, who will be working with my child, understand his or her special educational needs?

- How many children would be in my child's class or tutor group?
- How will I be involved in my child's education?
- How does the school ensure that there is good communication between home and school?
- How are children supervised at break time?
- How does the school make sure that all pupils are able to take part in school trips and other extra-curricular activities?
- If my child needs medication, who would be responsible for storing and administering it?
- How is bullying dealt with?
- How are pupils able to have their views heard?

Visiting a School – things you might look out for:

- when you arrive are you made to feel welcome?
- are the classrooms bright and interesting?
- do the children seem happy and busy?
- is pupils' work displayed attractively?
- is everyone treated with respect?
- does the school look well cared for and are you confident that it is a safe place for your child?
- are the toilets accessible to your child?
- would your child be able to access the whole school?
- what does your child think about the school?

Keeping an open mind

It is important to keep an open mind and consider several possibilities whilst trying to decide on a school.

Talk to people who know your child before making up your mind. They won't be able to tell you which school to choose but they will be able to talk about the things that are likely to help your child to learn and be happy. Your Casework Officer or the Parent Partnership Service can also provide you with some support.

I've chosen a school – what next?

Once you have chosen the school you want your child to attend, contact your Casework Officer to let them know. The SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team will always support parent preference of a school unless the school is unsuitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude or SEN, or the placement would be incompatible with the

efficient education of the other children with whom the child would be educated, or with the efficient use of resources.

Your Casework Officer will consult with your chosen school to seek their opinion on the above. In instances where specific concerns are raised, the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team will work with the school, yourselves and any professionals involved with your child in order to find a resolution. This work has to be done before a school is named within part 4 of your child's statement. In the few cases whereby a resolution cannot be found and a decision is made not to name the school of your choice within part 4 of your child's statement, your Casework Officer will provide support to look at alternative options.

Further Information

Your Casework Officer can advise you in relation to further information available from the SEN Assessment & Commissioning Team, as well as information sources external to the council.

Directorate for Children and Young People, Learning
Specialist Learning Support Service

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The Parent Partnership Service can be contacted at:

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